

TELEGRAM

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File Doc 14-25

07/11/18
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FROM
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

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SHUM, AR
GOA Rejects Derian Statements

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SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY

BUENOS AIRES 6273

REF: BUENOS AIRES 6232

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. As reported in the Buenos Aires press today (Aug. 11), the Argentine Foreign Ministry yesterday expressed its "indignation" regarding the accusations issued against Argentina Wednesday by Assistant Secretary Derian during congressional subcommittee hearings. The Ministry spokesman said that Ms. Derian's statements "are a demonstration of regrettable irresponsibility of a high-ranking official of a country which maintains relations which the Argentine Government wished to preserve on a level of friendship and mutual respect." The spokesman rejected Derian's statements "not only because of the clumsy distortion of reality which they imply, but also because of the use of false

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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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Exemption(s):

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OPTIONAL FORM 152(H)
(Formerly FS-413(H))
January 1975
Dept. of State

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and tendentious information which, in the final analysis, is an insult to the Argentine people."

2. The spokesman said that "one should bear in mind what Ms. Derian has said about her three visits to Argentina, where she was able to move about in absolute freedom." He added that the "persistence of the State Department in following such an unrealistic political line is astounding. North Americans who are in or who have been in Argentina in recent times have been able to see the reality of the country for themselves. They would realize that such statements made by officials of their own country are not the best way to contribute towards the improvement of relations between Argentina and the United States and the hemisphere."

3. The Argentine press gave prominence to the Ministry statement, but only the BA HERALD and LA NACION published immediate editorial comment. The HERALD declared that rarely have relations between the two countries been as strained as now and that Derian's comments are bound to make them worse. "What could have been a fruitful relationship between two administrations that may have more in common than either suspect, has already degenerated into a slinging match, with cries of torturer been met by cries of abortionist, as though the respective government actively encouraged the behavior the other

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finds obnoxious." The HERALD said it is possible to dispute Ms. Derian's contention that torture is applied systematically or that there has been no improvement in human rights, although it is "impossible to deny that torture is widely used in Argentina". Too much time has been spent on worrying about the Argentine "image," and too little about the Argentine reality, said the HERALD. In the end, Argentina must concern itself more with its own efforts to meet high standards, not foreign comment, it concluded.

4. LA NACION, a paper that generally portrays the official attitude, ran a benign editorial, accepting that relations with the US are bad and regretting that the issue of human rights is being used by "certain dominant groups in circumstantial power in the US to attack Argentina." The editorial cautioned patience and restraint in order not to widen the breach in relations, which will take time to heal. US policy, explains the editorial, grew out of the last republican administration, around the end of 1975, as a consequence of the Helsinki Accord. With the Carter Administration, the policy assumed more energy. Human rights has developed as a global issue, with the inherent danger of generalization. The editorial goes on to declare that no Argentine that loves justice and liberty can quarrel with a policy

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affirming human rights, or with the principle that man counts above all. "In the case of Argentina, what we object to is not the policy but the utilization by certain groups in US official circles to attack Argentina."

5. LA PRENSA notes that in response to its inquiry, the Foreign Ministry had not called in Ambassador Castro on the matter.

6. The press also reported Argentine Ambassador Aja Espil's plans to return to Argentina, lending the impression he has been suddenly recalled for consultations. Press also played up Aja Espil's signing of the new loan agreement for financing from US private banks for the Salto Grande dam project in the face of the EXIM Bank's rejection of financing for the Yacyreta project. (Turbines for Salto Grande are being provided by the Soviet Union and press is stressing that Soviets probably will be awarded the turbine contracts for Yacyreta and other dam projects as well.) END UNCLASSIFIED

7. BEGIN

✓ We would be ~~extremely~~ surprised if we got away with only today's restrained statement from the Ministry. The Junta has not met since the ~~Derian~~ Derian statement and it will undoubtedly have to take up whether further action is necessary in response to the latest blast of US public official criticism. Coming on the heels of last week's

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mutated protest note on US interference, it remains to be seen whether GOA will now feel itself forced to elevate its displeasure to the public level to answer Derian's charges. END

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